

Project Overview and Lessons Learned

Rhode Island Senior Resiliency Project

The Rhode Island Senior Resiliency Project provides emergency preparedness resources to long term care, assisted living, and independent senior housing facilities to improve their response to climate related disasters. This quick guide introduces you to one such resource.



Project Goal

- The goal of the Rhode Island Senior Resiliency Project is to support long term care, assisted living, and independent living senior housing facilities in preparing for climate related disasters through energy resiliency audits and the development of all-hazards emergency plans that emphasize sheltering in place
- When conducted by facilities that serve seniors, these important emergency preparedness actions will reduce risk to vulnerable senior citizens and increase overall emergency preparedness levels of the facilities that serve them

Project Participants

- The Rhode Island Senior Resiliency Project has engaged nearly 30 sites across Rhode Island that were directly impacted by Hurricane Irene, Super Storm Sandy, or Winter Storm Nemo
- The project has worked with partners, stakeholders, and consultants to assist qualified facilities to reduce risk and increase preparedness to the benefit of seniors, facility staff, and organizations as a whole
- Project resources are now available to long term care, assisted living, and independent senior housing facilities across Rhode Island

Get The Resources

- Download the Rhode Island Senior Resiliency Project resources at health.ri.gov/programs/climatechangeandhealth by clicking on the Senior Resiliency Project link

Project Phases

Phase 1

- In the pilot phase, one long term care facility, one assisted living facility, and one independent senior living facility were engaged. Each site conducted a facility self-assessment, followed by a visit by project staff
- Utilizing the pilot phase findings, project tools and resources were developed in support of project goals

Phase 2

- In Phase 2, the Rhode Island Department of Health secured additional funding to expand the project to include additional site participation

Phase 3

- Once that funding was secured, the project entered phase three, where the project was expanded statewide
- Rollout included the development of multiple resources for all of Rhode Island's long term care, assisted living, and independent senior living facilities

Project Resources

Facility Self-Assessment
to evaluate a facility's energy resiliency and ability to shelter in place in the event of an emergency

Gap Assessment Process
that guides facilities in addressing and prioritizing mitigation activities

Shelter-in-Place Plan
template to facilitate development of formal planning efforts

Staff Training Presentation
that supports facilities to educate and prepare staff members

Technical Assistance Webinar
series geared towards facility emergency preparedness and planning for staff

Quick Reference Guides
in written and electronic format to orient staff members at each type of facility

Lessons Learned

- Facility structure and resources vary greatly from site to site, but because of similarities, resources can be directed to facility types together and adapted to meet individual facility needs
- The level of emergency preparedness maturity from site to site was extremely broad, with facilities differing in their experience and capabilities
- The age of the facility does not necessarily correlate with facility preparedness level
- Implementation can be time consuming, with committed facility staff and engaged senior leadership as essential components to successful program completion
- Training support needs to be highly adaptable, with basic project related training resources needing extensive customization to meet each facility's training needs
- Resident personal preparedness emerged as an important issue for independent senior living facilities, with program resources developed to meet this need
- Smaller public housing authorities differed greatly from other participating facilities due to limited staff and infrastructure
- Project structure can successfully support sustainability and spread of project resources and tools
- Resources, program structure, and lessons learned can be adapted to meet the needs of facilities beyond Rhode Island

For Additional Assistance

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- The project is conducted by the Rhode Island Department of Health and supported with subject matter expertise from the Yale New Haven Health System Center for Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Response
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Gap Assessment Process

Independent Senior Housing Reference Guide

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Description

- After you complete a Facility Self-Assessment, develop a Gap Assessment so your facility can identify, prioritize, and address areas of opportunity highlighted though your Facility Self-Assessment

Process

- Start a Gap Assessment document, such as a Microsoft Word Document
- Refer to your Facility Self-Assessment, and group your strengths and areas of opportunity
- Develop a list of options to consider to address your vulnerabilities
- Prioritize and timeline efforts based on your facility's resources

Assessment Topics

- Your Gap Assessment will be a living document that will guide your facility in determining the way ahead in your emergency preparedness program
- Your facility's next steps will not be based upon assumptions or opinions, but instead upon actual vulnerabilities and priorities

Sample Gap Assessment Format

- There are many effective and efficient formats for conducting a Gap Assessment
- Your facility should use the format that you prefer, or build upon the sample format that follows

Sample Gap Assessment Format

Area of Opportunity	Option to Consider	Resources Required	Timeline	Action Plan

A Gap Assessment Bridges the Assessment and Planning Phases of the Continuum of Emergency Preparedness



Lessons Learned

- Look for the “low hanging fruit,” or opportunities where a vulnerability can be quickly, easily, or affordably addressed, as well as looking for long term projects that that might require complex planning, a large budget and an extensive timeline
- Your facility can prioritize actions based upon all of these important factors
- If you need assistance in how to address vulnerabilities identified in the assessment process, consider seeking support from other facilities within your coalition, your Local Emergency Planning Committee, an appropriate department within the Rhode Island State government or a reputable consultant
- Don’t overstate your facility’s strengths during the gap assessment process, since the areas you identify as challenges will be the areas where your planning and mitigation efforts are focused, so be as realistic as possible to direct your efforts where they need to go
- There is a spectrum of efforts that can be identified to address most vulnerabilities, ranging from policy and procedure development to complex, expensive and timely facility modifications
- Any effort along the mitigation spectrum will move your facility forward in increasing preparedness, but your vulnerabilities must first be identified

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Resident Personal Preparedness Planning

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Why Encourage Resident Personal Preparedness?

- Your residents may have assumptions about the level of support or resources that your facility will provide residents in an emergency that are not true
- Encouraging residents to conduct personal emergency preparedness planning is an opportunity to both support residents in preparing for a disaster and to communicate what resources and services your facility will provide in an emergency

The Most Vulnerable Residents

- Residents with chronic conditions or special medical needs are particularly vulnerable in a disaster because they may need extra assistance
- These residents should be encouraged to plan in more detail with their medical providers, caregivers, and other members of their personal support network
- Other vulnerable populations who may benefit from extra support in planning include residents who have dementia, are hearing impaired, sight impaired, who do not understand English, are mobility impaired, or are dependent on medication or other medical devices
- Some residents may need to take additional steps based on their special medical needs, such as individuals who are dependent upon electrically run medical equipment, who are required by most utility companies to register with them before a disaster occurs

Additional Facility Emergency Preparedness Steps

- Ensure that both facility staff and residents are receiving direction from local officials in the event of an emergency
- Critical decisions such as when to shelter-in-place or evacuate should be made with timely instructions from local officials, and the facility and residents should become familiar with these resources before an emergency occurs
- Agencies such as state and local departments of emergency management, local departments of health, the Rhode Island Department of Health and others can serve as reliable sources of information before and during an emergency
- Residents can also become active participants in emergency preparedness thorough programs such as FEMA's Community Emergency Response Team Program

All Facilities are Different

- All Independent Senior Housing facilities have varying levels of resources and services that are provided to residents
- Emergency power supply systems, safe rooms, areas of refuge, facility emergency supplies, or any other facility emergency preparedness resources should be clearly communicated so residents know what support they can expect to receive, and can plan for the additional help they might need in the event of an emergency
- No matter what level of emergency preparedness support or resources your facility offers to your residents, your facility has a responsibility to clearly articulate the level of support and resources you will provide in the event of an emergency

Resident Personal Preparedness Resources

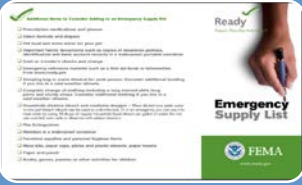


FEMA's *Prepare for Emergencies Now. Information for Older Americans*

Written and electronic resource

An overview of how senior citizens can prepare themselves for an emergency by making an emergency supply kit, writing a plan for what they will do and being informed

Download by clicking image or go to www.fema.gov and search by publication name



FEMA's *Emergency Supply List*

Written and electronic resource

Lists supplies that residents can gather and keep in their residence to assist them in a shelter-in-place situation

Download by clicking image or go to www.fema.gov and search by publication name



FEMA's *Family Emergency Communication Guide*

Written and electronic resource

Guides residents through the process of creating and practicing a plan to communicate with their support network in an emergency

Download by clicking image or go to www.fema.gov and search by publication name



FEMA's *Preparing Makes Sense for Older Americans*

Four and a half minute video resource containing information specific to older Americans and tips on how to prepare for emergency situations

Download by clicking image or go to www.fema.gov and search by video name



FEMA's *We Prepare Everyday*

Two minute video resource showing people with disabilities taking charge to prepare themselves and their families for emergencies and emphasizing the building blocks of preparedness

Download by clicking image or go to www.fema.gov and search by video name



FEMA's *Preparing Makes Sense for People with Disabilities and Other Access and Functional Needs*

Five minute video resource containing information specific to Americans with disabilities or other access and functional needs regarding emergency preparedness

Download by clicking image or go to www.fema.gov and search by video name

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Facility Self-Assessment Tool

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Get The Resource

- Download the Rhode Island Senior Resiliency Project Facility Self-Assessment Tool at health.ri.gov/programs/climatechangeandhealth by clicking on the Senior Resiliency Project link

Description

- Microsoft Excel tool
- Assesses facility's ability to respond to a disaster that might impact utilities and require a facility to shelter-in-place
- Conducted by facility staff

Assessment Topics

- Examines multiple areas of the facility including facility location and elevation, facility structure, utilities, resources, food service, staffing and notification, alternate care, and evacuation and movement
- Due to the variations in structure and services provided by independent senior housing facilities, some assessment topics may not be applicable to all facilities
- Simply skip assessment areas that do not apply to your facility

Facility Self-Assessment Process

Gather the Team and Resources

Download the Facility Self-Assessment Tool

Assemble your facility's Emergency Preparedness Committee

Involve other multidisciplinary staff to insure representation in each assessment area

Obtain a FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM), if appropriate

Conduct the Assessment

Answer each question completely, making certain information is as accurate and current as possible

If any questions are not applicable to your facility or scope of service, skip them

Pull in additional staff, as needed, along the way

Examine the Results

As a group, examine your facility's Self-Assessment results

Identify your facility's strengths and areas of opportunity

Conduct a Gap Assessment

Develop a gap assessment document to go with your assessment

Group your strengths and areas of opportunity together


Develop a list of options to consider to address your vulnerabilities

Prioritize and timeline efforts based on your facility's resources

Lessons Learned

- Common Facility Self-Assessment Findings in Rhode Island include lack of stored potable water, generators with insufficient output capability, fuel for generators that might last only one to two days, and lack of devices and training for emergent evacuations
- Pay particular attention to these common problem areas when you conduct your own Facility Self-Assessment

Best Practices

- 
- As you conduct your Facility Self-Assessment, reflect on your own facility's experiences during past drills and actual responses to climate related situations
 - Take your time, involve appropriate staff and utilize accurate information. In this way, you'll get a true picture of your facility's strengths and vulnerabilities
 - There are no right or wrong answers to your assessment. Identifying a vulnerability is the first step in mitigating the vulnerability and strengthening your facility's resiliency
 - Share your gap assessment document with your leadership team to help your facility determine the way forward
 - Look for the "low hanging fruit," or opportunities where a vulnerability can be quickly, easily or affordably addressed
 - Plan for long term projects that that might require complex planning, a large budget, and an extensive timeline

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Site Walk Through

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Description

- A Site Walk Through is a tour of the interior and exterior of your facility that is conducted by facility staff and leadership
- A Site Walk Through supports you in assessing your facility's ability to respond to a disaster that might impact utilities and require a facility to shelter in place

Prepare For Your Site Walk Through

- First assemble your Site Walk Through team, consisting of staff who have a role in emergency preparedness
- Also consider involving members of your leadership team, especially if leadership takes a more hands on approach
- Bring materials such as plans, procedures, and your Facility Self-Assessment, described next

Use Your Facility Self-Assessment as Your Guide

- The Facility Self-Assessment Tool, developed as part of the Rhode Island Senior Resiliency Project, can serve as a guide as you conduct your Site Walk Through
- The topics for your Site Walk Through should be the same as the topics covered in the Facility Self-Assessment Tool
- Due to variations in structure and services provided by independent senior housing facilities, some assessment topics may not be applicable to all facilities
- Simply skip areas that do not apply to your facility

Download a Facility Self-Assessment Tool

- Download a Rhode Island Senior Resiliency Project Facility Self-Assessment Tool at health.ri.gov/programs/climatechangeandhealth by clicking on the Senior Resiliency Project link

Why Conduct a Site Walk Through?

- You walk through your facility all the time, but a Site Walk Through allows your team to formally examine your facility with a focus exclusively on emergency preparedness
- As part of your Site Walk Through, you can verify assumptions and any other information that are part of your plans and procedures to make sure it is both current and correct
- A Site Walk Through can also help you orient new employees, prompt important planning discussions, and identify potential emergency preparedness issues before they arise

Site Walk Through Areas

Consider facility location and elevation by walking through evacuation routes and considering possible obstructions

Consider facility structure by examining area such as windows, doors, barriers, floor and external drainage and roofing

Consider utilities and resources by examining water supply elements, generators, fuel supply, and power supply

Follow internal, horizontal, and vertical evacuation routes, including visiting elevators, stairwells, and reviewing evacuation devices

Tour areas related to food and nutrition and examine potable water storage, onsite or vendor food service areas, and food storage locations

Visit alternate care areas

It's Not Just the Plan, It's the Planning

- A Facility Walk Through illustrates that when considering emergency preparedness, it isn't just the plan that matters, it is the planning process
- The conversations and education that occur during the Facility Walk Through can increase the emergency preparedness knowledge and skills of your team

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Shelter-in-Place Plan Template

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Get The Resource

- Download the Rhode Island Senior Resiliency Project Shelter-in-Place Plan Template at health.ri.gov/programs/climatechangeandhealth by clicking on the Senior Resiliency Project link

Description

- In considering your facility's ability to respond to an event that may impact utilities and prompt residents and staff to remain in the facility, referring to your facility's formal plan to shelter-in-place is a component critical to your facility's response
- The purpose of your facility's Shelter-in-Place Plan is to describe the systems and processes by which the facility will maintain operations prior to, during, and after a disaster that involves residents and staff remaining at the facility
- A Shelter-in-Place Plan is specific in scope only to incidents when the residents will be remaining at the facility
- It does not replace any existing plans or policies but provides a ready-reference of existing information for staff

Using the Template

- If your facility does not currently have a Shelter-in-Place Plan, begin with the Shelter-in-Place Template and adapt it to the unique needs of your facility
- If your facility already has a Shelter-in-Place Plan, compare your plan with the template resource to identify any gaps in your current plan

Best Practices

- Like all policies, procedures and plans, a Shelter-in-Place Plan should be reviewed and updated at least annually by leadership
- Annual plan review should involve tasks such as assembling your emergency preparedness committee, communicating with leadership, updating staff, educating residents and residents' families, reflecting on facility and area changes, contacting suppliers, vendors and partners, and other preparedness related actions
- These steps not only result in a policy that is current, but also strengthen your facility's emergency response in important ways, such as communication and networking
- Continuously improving your facility's Shelter-in-Place Plan can result in a stronger, more robust plan and a stronger, more responsive team
- In the emergency preparedness field, it's not just the plan that benefits a facility, it's also the planning process

The Shelter-in-Place Plan Template Covers the Following Topics

Authorities and Responsibilities

- Including how and when the plan is activated, the configuration of the emergency management team, and command and control
- Address who has the authority to make decisions when the Senior Leadership is unavailable

Facility Description

- Including number of buildings, population housed, number of staff, and sheltering requirements

Utilities and Resources

- Including emergency power generation, nutrition and hydration resources, ventilation and air conditioning contingencies, supply levels and overstocking options, and waste management processes

Food and Nutrition

- Including alternate methods for meal preparation, identification of primary and backup food vendors, food storage supplies, and additional storage capabilities upon advanced notification of a disaster, if applicable

Water Supply

- Potable water supply including currently stored supply and storages plans and capabilities upon advanced notification of a disaster
- Water supply for sanitation

Staffing Issues

- Defining the level of services that will be provided
- Emergency sheltering plans and capabilities for staff

Evacuation and Movement

- Although separate from shelter-in-place, evacuation and movement is inherently tied to shelter-in-place due to the unpredictable nature of disasters
- A shelter-in-place situation may unexpectedly turn into an evacuation situation
- Triggers or tipping points must be identified that might necessitate a partial or full evacuation
- Any mechanisms in place to assist with evacuation

Additional Tools and Resources

- May be included in the plan, such as personal preparedness checklists for staff, residents and residents' families, pre-storm facility checklists, and hoteling rosters

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